

EUROPARC Federation

**Memorandum of Understanding
with the United States National Parks Service North East Region**

EUROPARC Members' Questionnaire

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☒ Yes, we are interested in an exchange programme with a protected area in the United States (North East Region).

☐ No, we are not interested in an exchange programme with a protected area in the United States (North East Region).

Please state reason:

1. If yes, on which topics would you be interested in pursuing cooperation?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> organisational development | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ecotourism |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sustainability | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> marketing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transboundary management | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> financing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (please state) wildlife management |

2. If yes, what type of exchange would you be interested in ?

- ☒ at staff level (professional development)
- ☒ at political level (Presidents, Board Members)
- ☐ other stakeholders (e.g. farmers, tourism businesses)

continued

3. If yes, please give a short description of the features of your park and main areas of current work:

An area at the heart of the Maritime Alps is protected by two remarkable mountain parks: the Alpi Marittime Nature Park in Italy and the Mercantour National Park in France. These twinned parks complement one another in terms of their history and culture as well as in their importance for biodiversity and scientific study: they are good examples of **transfrontier cooperation**.

From the geological point of view the region is extremely diversified. This feature and a wide variety of microclimates have given rise to a flora truly unique in Europe. Species from the Mediterranean and the Arctic co-exist, and there is an unusually high degree of endemism.

The most ancient vestiges of human colonization here date from the Bronze age, between 2000 and 1000 BC – times when shepherds and their flocks were already moving across the two sides of the mountains

Alpi Marittime Nature Park and Mercantour National Park have a common historical origin: both derive from the old hunting reserve of Vittorio Emanuele II, King of Italy, which was created in 1857 and covered vast portions of the two sides of the Maritime Alps. When they were created in 1980 and 1979, respectively, they inherited from the Royal Hunting Reserve a long tradition of **wildlife management**.

Today the most significant transfrontier initiative remains Operation Ibex, which included the creation of two new groups of ibex, one on each side of the border, in areas that had not yet been colonized.

This operation took place in 1986-1989 and was considered a great success, having increased the common population of ibex from 400 to 800 individuals. Moreover, it resulted in even closer collaboration between the parks' managers, who decided that Operation Ibex should not become an isolated incident.

At a ceremony on 10 July 1987, park officials signed a formal agreement twinning the Alpi Marittime and Mercantour parks.

Another successful operation involved the reintroduction of the bearded vulture *Gypaetus barbatus*, the largest European bird, which disappeared from the Alps at the beginning of the last century. Because the vulture can cover hundreds of kilometers in a short period of time, the extension of the two protected areas together (a total of 100,000 ha) was particularly valued by the international expert commission directing the project.

Vulture releases began in 1993 and will continue alternately in France and Italy for a period of ten years. The project has attracted enormous interest from both the media and the public.

In another promising development, in 1992 wolves *Canis lupus* were spotted on the French side of the Alps. Scientists determined they had originated from a population in Italy's Apennine range. They continued to spread, and in summer 1995, they were sighted on the Italian side of the Maritime Alps. We have prepared a joint project for the wolves which includes scientific research, a public information campaign, and a common protection policy for domestic cattle.

For the success of their transfrontier cooperation, in October 1993 the Council of Europe awarded its Diploma for the protection of nature to the Alpi Marittime and Mercantour Parks.

Another field of work is sustainable tourism: Alpi Marittime Nature Park has signed in 2001 the European Charter of sustainable tourism in protected areas and Mercantour will follow soon; a special association Ecoturismo in Marittime has been created in partnership with local tourism businesses, to prepare and promote specific ecotourism activities.

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Signed: Patrizia Rossi

Date: 15/3/2003

Please return by 20 March 2003 to:

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